



Mrs John Jenks Tolson
Milk St 19 July
1816

CONCISE ACCOUNT

OF THE

LONDON SOCIETY

FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIANITY

AMONGST THE JEWS.

“For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world,
what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead.”—
ROMANS XI. 15.



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The Compiler of the History of the Jews cannot but feel peculiarly interested in the fate of this Nation. And as the Jewish Repository, and other tracts published by the London Society for promoting Christianity amongst the Jews, are, as she believes, not generally known in New England, she was induced to give a brief outline of the means adopted by the Society to bring this long neglected people to a cordial acknowledgement of the grand tenet, in which all Christians unite, that "*Jesus Christ is the Messiah,*" and she indulges the hope that the attention awakened to the welfare of the "lost sheep of the house of Israel," will be extended to America.

ACCOUNT.

THE present age is distinguished for its many excellent institutions for the benefit of mankind. Bible Societies have been established in various countries, the Sacred Scriptures translated into almost every known language, and a large number of missionaries sent to preach the gospel in heathen countries. Education has been more generally attended to than in former times, and the means of acquiring knowledge facilitated. Great Britain, in particular, is eminently distinguished for the variety and importance of her benevolent institutions; among which the *London Society for promoting Christianity amongst the Jews*, must be peculiarly interesting to all who are devoutly waiting for the redemption of Israel.

This Society, which was established in 1809, consists of a Patron, President, Vice Presidents, Treasurer, and life and annual members, together with such officers and servants as may be necessary for conducting the business of the institution. Men of piety and benevolence, of talents and learning, of influence and rank, of nobility and royalty, have come forward to assist in promoting the temporal and eternal welfare of the Jews.

The means adopted to effect this great object are; the extensive circulation of the Bible; and endeavouring to excite the Jews to search their own scriptures. Religious tracts have been not only distributed among the Jews in England, but large quantities have been sent to their countrymen in foreign parts. A church has been procured, since called the Jews' Chapel, where the Rev. Mr. Fry, a converted Jew, has preached a weekly lecture to his brethren, and great numbers of them have attended. They have also established a quarterly lecture to be preached to the Jews; and the discourses are, by way of distinction, denominated Demonstration Sermons, or Sermons demonstrative of our Lord Jesus Christ, as the true Messiah. Lectures have also been preached for their

benefit in the Episcopal Chapel in Ely place by ministers of the established church. Another important undertaking of the London Society is the translation of the New Testament into Hebrew, that they may be able to give it to the Jews in their native language. In order to render it as correct as possible, fifty clergymen of different denominations, among whom are the professors of each of the universities in the three kingdoms, superintend the translation gratuitously, and with the utmost care and circumspection; and the Society hope to circulate the New Testament in pure biblical Hebrew, among the dispersed of Judah and Israel in every part of the world. The Society also are sensible of the vast importance of early instilling the principles of virtue and piety in the youthful mind. For this purpose they have established a charity school for Jewish children to receive their education till they arrive at a proper age to be bound out apprentices in religious families. A number of the boys, who have exhibited superior talents, have been placed under the tuition and care of Rev. Mr. Fry to receive that education which shall fit them for missions at home or abroad. Boys of promising piety and ability are to be selected for the same purpose, and it is hoped they will, with the divine blessing, become useful to their nation. The Society also extend their protection to those adult Jews, who, upon their profession of the Christian religion, are renounced and refused any assistance from their brethren: they have established a printing office which has furnished employment for a number who have conducted themselves with propriety. Others, who are abandoned and persecuted for their religion, are employed by the Society in a Cotton Manufactory. They have also commenced a Sunday school for the benefit of those adult Jews, who may be disposed to attend, as many of this people are deplorably ignorant, and very few, comparatively, are instructed in the English language: and that no occasion may be lost of supplying a Jew with a copy of the holy scriptures in the language in which he is able to read them, the Society have purchased for occasional distribution, a number of Bibles

and Testaments in the German and Portuguese languages.

The London Society publish annually a Jewish Repository, or monthly communication, respecting the Jews, which commenced January, 1813, and is continued to the present time.* It contains papers on all subjects connected with Judaism, Jewish affairs, or Hebrew literature. They are collecting all the writings and opinions of ancient and modern Jews, with a view to answer and expose them. They recommend the study of Jewish history: "This people," say they, "as a nation, are too little known; it would be eminently serviceable to us all, as Christians and Gentiles, to know how that nation is degraded—how treated by Christians." Hence they consider it their indispensable duty to acquaint themselves with the manners, customs, habits and prejudices of this people both ancient and modern; and above all, to take care to refute and expose all the errors and absurdities of their present mistaken opinions.† Agents are employed by the Society for the purpose of ascertaining the present state of the Jews on the continent, and distributing religious tracts among them. These tracts, which are written expressly for their use, are generally gratefully received by them; and the Jews on the continent appear to have an increasing disposition to enquire into the truth of the Christian religion.

The London Society is founded on a principle, in which the Established Church and Christians of various denominations of Dissenters can cordially unite. It is their plan to limit themselves to the simple object of convincing their Jewish brethren, that *Jesus is the Messiah, the Saviour of the world*; leaving them, when thus instructed, to search the scriptures, and judge for

* In 1816, the plan of this work was enlarged, and a new title substituted, viz. The Jewish Expositor, or Friend of Israel.

† At an early period of the Institution it became an object of the London Society to collect a Library, consisting of all those works on Hebrew literature which are of highest repute among the Jews, and most nearly connected with the Jewish and Christian controversy.

themselves respecting all inferior points on which Christians themselves are not agreed.

In April 7th, 1813, the first stone of the Episcopal Chapel, School and *Asylum, at Bethual Green, was laid by his Royal Highness the Duke of Kent, the patron of the London Society. The Lord Mayor and Sheriffs, and each of the Lords and other Vice Presidents, took a part in the ceremony, which was performed in the presence of nearly twenty thousand spectators. An appropriate prayer was read, and the divine blessing fervently implored upon the erection of the Chapel, which was dedicated to the conversion of Israel. On this occasion the benevolent spirit of Christianity rose superiour to the narrow restriction of denomination and party. The prelates of the National Establishment, and ministers of various denominations of Dissenters, united in their prayers and exertions for the salvation of Israel; and in the pure, disinterested, Catholic spirit of the gospel of Christ, the dissenters cheerfully contributed to build an Episcopal chapel.

The Rev. Dr. Collyer observed on this occasion, "We are now realizing the feeling which St. Paul entertained when he said, *henceforth I know no man according to the flesh.* I know him no more according to his denomination, I know him only as a follower of Jesus Christ. We are giving one another to see, that as the children of a common parent, and above all, as Christians and followers of a common master; the real points of our difference are very few, those of our agreement are incalculably numerous. It is not possible in the present world to produce uniformity of observance, but it is absolutely unnecessary. How is the prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ answered on these and similar occasions, that all his disciples might be one even as he and his father were one. When Jesus Christ was stripped of his robe at the foot of the cross, the soldiers would not divide it; they spared it because of its beauty, and said, 'Let us cast lots for it.' Let it then never be said that Christians in the nine-

* This building was designed to be at once an Asylum and House of Industry for indigent converted Jews.

teenth century, are dividing that mantle which heathens spared."

On 16 of July, 1814, the Episcopal chapel, erected by the London Society, at Bethual Green, was opened, under a licence from the Right Rev. the Lord Bishop of London. Thus a year which was signalized by the restoration of an interval of peace to the bleeding nations of Europe, was likewise distinguished by the opening of the first Christian place of worship which has been erected for the peculiar use of the descendants of Abraham, since the period of their dispersion among all nations, on the final destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. The chapel has been well filled, and though many of the unconverted Jews do not usually attend it; yet on some occasions there have been a considerable number. There is reason to believe that the chapel has proved very useful to the Christian inhabitants of that quarter of the suburbs of the Metropolis. The Society confidently hope that the existence of so many converted Jews, collected in one congregation, under the patronage of the established church, cannot fail powerfully to attract, and ultimately to command, the attention of the Jewish nation. The chapel is under the ministerial charge of the Rev. Mr. Hawtrej, one of the secretaries to the London Society, and a regular clergyman of the church of England.

The benevolent exertions of the London Society in behalf of the Jews, have roused the attention of the Christian world to the obligations of promoting Christianity among this long persecuted and suffering people; and excited a strong sensation among the Jews themselves: Several hundreds, perhaps thousands of them, having become possessed with the sacred spirit of enquiry after truth, assemble in greater or less numbers to hear the Gospel preached, with a view to its adoption, if convinced by the evidence that Jesus Christ was their expected Messiah. In 1815, one hundred and forty two Jewish children had been educated in Christian principles by the Society, with the consent and request of their parents, and they are willing to receive as many as the Jews will entrust to their pat-

ronage. Fifty nine persons have been initiated into the Christian church by baptism. A number of Jews are preparing themselves for the ministry, who, it is hoped, will be eminently useful in preaching to their brethren. The Institution has received the zealous support and co-operation of numerous auxiliary societies, which have greatly increased in different parts of the United Kingdom; among which, there is one in Scotland, and two in Dublin; one consisting of ladies, the other of gentlemen. At Bristol there is also an auxiliary society; and the clergy in that city have begun to imitate the example of their brethren in London, by opening their churches for monthly lectures on subjects relative to the Jews. New correspondencies have been opened in England, Scotland and Ireland, and some literary characters of the highest respectability in the different universities, have enrolled themselves as subscribers and corresponding members.

The converted Jews have formed a Society called the *Children of Abraham*, who held their first anniversary meeting, in 1814, at the Jews' Chapel. This Society meet once a week, in the name of Jesus Christ, for religious instruction, and offer their supplications to the God of Abraham for themselves, and their Jewish brethren. Several Christian friends assemble and unite in prayer for the house of Israel, and the extension of the Messiah's kingdom.

A number of excellent sermons have been preached before the London Society, to animate and assist them in the great object of converting the Jews. The following extracts are selected from a discourse of the Rev. J. W. Cunningham, Vicar of Harrow, and an author whose ingenious publications have obtained great celebrity in New England. His sermon is on Numbers, xxiii. 8. "How shall I curse whom God has not cursed; or how shall I defy whom the Lord hath not defied." After detailing the awful and mysterious character of Balaam, Mr. Cunningham proceeds to show, that there has been in all ages a strik-

* There are a large number of ladies' auxiliary Societies in various parts of Great Britain.

ing opposition between the designs of God and the conduct of men towards the Jewish people. Under this head, he notices the persecution the Jews have suffered, and describes the manifestations of divine mercy towards this favoured people, at different epochs in their history; and observes as follows:

“Let us now come to a fourth period, viz. to our own days. And here it is necessary to observe that, notwithstanding the continued unbelief and disobedience of the Jews, the merciful intentions of God towards his prostrate people are as obvious and prominent now, as at any other period of their history. It is true that they are fallen,—fallen as those must expect to fall who “trample under foot the Son of God, and count the blood of the covenant an unholy thing,”—fallen as you and I must expect to fall, if, when God stretches out the golden sceptre of mercy, we refuse to take hold of it. They are indeed fallen,—but is the patience of God, therefore, towards them exhausted,—has he no mercies in store for them,—does he mean to leave them in the dust,—shall the banner of falsehood forever float upon the towers of the Holy City,—shall the daughter of Zion sit forever in her gates mourning and desolate? “Search the scriptures,” my brethren, unroll any page of the prophetic volume, and what do you find? Promises, I may venture to say, almost countless in their number, and immeasurable in their extent, renewing to the Jews the charter of their hopes, and triumphs, and joys, promising the Messiah for a King, and “the uttermost parts of the earth for their possession!” “I will strengthen the house of Judah, and I will save the house of Joseph: and I will bring them again to place them; for I have mercy upon them, and they shall be as though I had not cast them off; for I am the Lord their God, and I will hear them; I will hiss for them, and gather them; for I have redeemed them: They shall remember me in far countries; and they shall live with their children, and turn again.” But it is needless to multiply extracts of this kind. They abound in the sacred volume. Whenever the harp of Zion sounds, the song of their future triumph is heard. When-

ever the hand of prophesy rends the veil from future events, and displays to us the glories of the last days, it always points to the Jews as first in the procession of worthies—as leading the march of universal victory—as resuming their lost precedence over an evangelized world. The ultimate triumphs of Christianity itself are represented as, in a measure, suspended upon the conversion of the Jews. The world is to wait for them. The hand of eternal mercy is to be unchained only by their conversion. The earth is not to be watered by the richest dews of heaven, till the vine flourishes upon the holy hill.”

Mr. Cunningham proceeds distinctly to state, and answer some of the objections which are made to the London Society for attempting the conversion of the Jews, and observes, “The principle on which the Society proceeds, is this; it discovers in the sacred writings a general injunction to preach the gospel to all nations. No people being excluded from the blessing, the servant of God naturally searches out those points of the universe where his attempts are likely to be most profitably conducted. Amongst others, he finds a people partly mixed up with the mass of Christian society, and partly collected in the very centre of Europe; either living, that is in the light of Christianity, or touching upon the confines of it. He finds, moreover, that the conversion of that nation, thus eligibly circumstanced for instruction, is to precede the general conversion of the world. He discovers that this people have always been a peculiar object of the divine dispensations, and that almost every movement of Providence points to them: Is it then wonderful that their conversion should become a favourite object to the devout student of the Bible,—that he should begin his labours at a point, where he knows that partial success will pave the way to the general success,—that he should cheer his fainting hopes with looking on the star which God hath lighted up in the dark horizon of Judea,—that he should follow its guidance, and should there choose to combat with unbelief, at the point where the triumph of faith is to be achieved.”

Our eloquent author proceeds to observe, “It has

been said by some, "We discover no particular encouragement to undertake the conversion of the Jews at the present moment, either in the circumstances of our own country, or in those of the world in general." "To this," says he, "I reply, that I do discover such encouragement. I discover it in the dislocation of the Mahometan power, which has always been the grand political barrier to Jewish restoration. I discover it in the concurrent testimony of the most able interpreters of prophecy, that the period for the restoration of the Jews is fast approaching, I discover it in the fact, that many of the Jews themselves entertain the same opinion. I discover it in the remarkable circumstance, which seems to be well authenticated, of many Jews having manifested of late a singular disposition to migrate to their own land.* I discover it in the unprecedented facilities provided in our own age and country, by our commercial connexions, by our naval preponderance, and above all, by the very general spirit of religious zeal and enterprize which God has so mercifully awakened in this favoured country. I discover it in the means supplied for the operations of this Society, and the operation of other Societies; by the circulation of Bibles, and of Missionaries abroad, and by the erection of schools, upon a new and powerful principle, at home. I discover it in the fact of the almost instantaneous erection of a Society, combining so much of the virtue, talents, and wealth of the country, and successful beyond all hope in its application to public benevolence. These are facilities, my brethren, which, in my poor judgment, no individual can safely neglect to employ. These are calls which I, for one, am afraid not to obey."

"We have much lost time to redeem,—many past injuries to cancel,—many and countless obligations to

* The following anecdote is introduced with peculiar effect. "I remember," says Mr. Cunningham, "to have heard the late venerable Bishop Porteus, not long before his death, standing, as it were, upon the very verge of heaven, and thence, perhaps, catching some more than common glimpse of the glories within, use his expiring strength to stimulate his countrymen to become the apostles of the land of Israel."

this afflicted people to repay. As I stand here I seem to hear the voices of those Jews who evangelized the world, calling for some return to their country. I hear again the voice of *Him* who condescended to spring from a Jewish mother, and to dwell upon its favoured soil, calling upon us to teach all nations, "*beginning at Jerusalem.*" And hearing such invitations, I desire myself to obey them; and I feel it incumbent on me to say to you—**Come, and let us join hand and heart in this great work.**"

The cause in which the London Society are engaged, begins to excite attention in America. In the *Christian Herald*, published in New York, 1816, it is recommended that a Society of Christians should be formed, to digest a plan of operations, to open a correspondence with the Society, and enter immediately upon the work in which they are engaged.

Deeply impressed with the importance of this great object, a number of ladies met on the fifth of June, 1816, and after supplicating the throne of grace for direction and a blessing, formed themselves into an association to be called, the **Female Society of Boston and the vicinity, for promoting Christianity amongst the Jews.**



